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**Ellinghausen, Laurie, ed. *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's English History Plays***

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**Ellinghausen, Laurie, ed.**

***Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's English History Plays.***

New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2017. Pp. ix, 249. ISBN 978-1-60329-300-6 (paperback) US\$24.

Does the audience of *Hamilton* need to understand “history” to be aesthetically and critically engaged? Crowds watching early productions of Shakespeare’s histories would have been in much the same position. Two hundred years after the historical fact, an audience might recognize big names and major conflicts. The intricacies of plot would feel new, however; many details would be allusive noise, yet somehow transformed into a narrative with compelling characterization and themes. With only a genealogical chart and mini-lecture on the Wars of the Roses, most of our students will be as prepared for Shakespeare as they are for Lin-Manuel Miranda. But how we teachers of the histories can inspire the fervour audiences bring to *Hamilton* is at the heart of *Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's English History Plays*, a collection of pedagogical resources and strategies from instructors aware of the barriers to learning the histories: overwhelming dumps of names, sometimes incomprehensible political stakes, a focus on the unrelatably high and great (with seemingly invisible female characters), and (at least in North America) none of the cachet of *Hamlet*.

Editor Laurie Ellinghausen provides an excellent addition to the Modern Language Association’s *Approaches to Teaching* series. The book follows the forms common to the entire series and succeeds in targeting specialists and non-specialists, whether they are teaching one text or many. Summarizing results of a survey of 130 experienced teachers of the histories, part 1 offers “Materials” that include preferred editions, useful supplementary resources, key primary texts, critical traditions, and available performances and digital resources (and related scholarship). Part 2 provides a trove of 29 brief essays guaranteed to inspire whatever your approach, available class time, or interest. Having difficulty helping students find their way in? Have students make a map to understand geographic and cultural disjunctions; build word clouds to understand political campaign messaging; employ Stanislavskian method, or make a text-based legend with coloured pencils to understand characterization. Want a theoretical approach? Try the ecocritical, global, or gender offerings by noted experts in their fields. Tired of *Richards* and the popular *Henries*? Get an idea for incorporating *Henry VI* (1–3), *King John*, or *Henry VIII*.

While Ellinghausen divides part 2 into seven sections, there is also an unmarked divide between many of the essays here. About half of the offerings (mostly in the first three sections) might answer this review's opening question with a *yes*. They describe ideas for understanding historical contexts and putting primary sources of many genres and kinds in dialogue with the plays. They are suitable for teaching not just Shakespeare but any course interested in the interdisciplinary study of legitimacy, power, authority, or political theatre. One standout is Glenn Odom's description of how to help students define "history play" by creating taxonomies that make sense of the various sources' contradictory historiographic modes. Another is Matthew J. Smith's plan for teaching relationships between religion and rule by engaging students with texts from multiple genres and with multiple approaches (including singing, translating, and diagramming). Essays mostly but not exclusively in the four additional sections might reply to the Hamilton question with a *no*. Teachers who seek relatable ways to get students interested in a play before delving into "history" might prefer to browse here. Patricia Marchesi, for example, asks students to envision Hal and Hotspur as political candidates with advertising campaigns and platforms while Catherine E. Thomas has students access archives of Shakespearean cartoons to understand the research process and learn electronic data literacy. Essays in this group tend to minimize "history" and to offer experiential learning strategies that engage students in their own artistic or scholarly projects. As such, they render Ellinghausen's volume a welcome update to the other MLA Approaches to Shakespeare. Previous resources have treated Shakespeare in performance, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and the romances, but the last of these was published in 2002. Ellinghausen's collection brings Shakespeare pedagogy into the era of scholarship on student-centred learning and multi-modal approaches and digital tools. There is much here to sustain teachers of comedies and tragedies as well.

A few essays notably bridge these two strains and describe exercises in experiential learning and digital literacy that manage simultaneously to engage students with contexts and problems particular to the history genre. Christy Desmet gets students to tackle historiographic questions by employing digital editions of Holinshed and Fox to determine whether Falstaff was a "real" person. Paula Marantz Cohen's project-based learning series of connected classes takes students from historiographically contextualized reading to ways of applying that knowledge to their own performance and dramaturgy. Joshua Calhoun

designs a series of research-based exercises that encourage independent investigation with tools and texts especially suited to history plays. His work is also unique in this collection for its data-supported measures of success.

That not all the essays in this volume combine active learning strategies with genre-focused study points to a continuing challenge with these plays: how to tap into what is compelling about Shakespeare's histories—as histories—for those who will have neither time nor inclination to absorb the context. I suspect, if the association publishing this series were British instead of American, the range of strategies to achieve this goal might look different. Perhaps we can take a page from British cultural materialist and presentist understandings of the histories in performance and tap into interests in our own origin stories. Caroline McManus's essay on teacher training tends in this direction by linking Common Core privileging of "foundational US documents" (187) to active learning strategies for historiographic investigation. US "histories" compete, as *Hamilton's* success attests. As an early critic of the musical observed, the story of one individual is transformed to a story of a nation created by immigrants. Our North American fascination with business leaders and the histories of their companies is another potentially exploitable connection. Approaches to teaching the Roman Plays, anyone?

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**Fouigny, Mary-Nelly, and Marie Roig Miranda, eds.**

*Aristote dans l'Europe des XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles : transmissions et ruptures. Actes du colloque international organisé à Nancy (5, 6 et 7 novembre 2015).*

Europe XVI–XVII, 24. Nancy: Groupe "XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles en Europe" / Université de Lorraine, 2017. Pp. 453. ISBN 978-2-9917030-13-4 (paperback) €30.

Founded by the Université de Lorraine in 2000, the series Europe XVI–XVII explores a wide variety of themes linked to the Renaissance. This book, the twenty-fourth in the series, stems from a conference held in Nancy, France in 2015 on the place of Aristotle and his ideas in Renaissance Europe into the seventeenth century. The editors of this collection of articles are Mary-Nelly